

SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITION IN ON-THE JOB TRAINING FACILITATED BY OJT MONITORING

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Abstract

The transition from school life to work life of a person is a crucial adjustment period. To help in the transition, school to work transition programs are provided to students. An example of such program is the On the Job training (OJT) program. This is being implemented by majority of TVET schools in the Philippines and the same is true with MFI. Past experiences show that the students in OJT are exposed to difficulties, challenges, and conflicting situations. The students face predicaments that could make or break them. They need support and guidance as they apply the things they learned in this stage or level of their life.

The paper presents the best practice of MFI Technological Institute, which is a monitoring scheme for students devised to respond to the students' needs during the transition. The scheme is called OJT Monitoring. There are at least 5 activities under the program. The student reporting, OJT visit, and OJT get-together activities are highlighted in this paper. This describes each activity and how MFI implement it. The result of the evaluation of the monitoring specifically the student reporting is also presented. Majority of the students said that the monitoring helped them in dealing with different problems and in coping, adjusting and preparing them for work. The main problem encountered by the students was the schedule of the monitoring conflicting with their schedule at work. All of them recommended the monitoring to be implemented on succeeding batches. There were also suggestions for improvement in the schedule, the people involved, and the procedure of implementation.

Keywords: OJT, monitoring, WBL, best practice, school to work transition

1. Introduction

School life and work life are the large portions of our life. Although these are not the only contents, these two are common to majority of persons. The connection of these two is shown in Figure 1, which is a framework on school to work transition (S2WT). In the framework, the S2WT program is like a bridge from school to work. It prepares students to enter and succeed in the world of work. It helps the student adjust and know what is needed for work so as to be effective. Still referring to Figure 1, it shows that S2WT make visible the link between the school and work. The visibility of the link makes the link meaningful. With the S2WT, students are not left by themselves to sort out the meaning of learning in school and its use whether directly or indirectly to the learning at work. Fig.1 also shows the overlap of school and work life, which leads to understanding the connectedness. This is described by Reference [1] that "there is a positive 'connectedness' between the schooling process and living productive lives." With S2WT, the students would look positively at school as a means to work and in working live productive lives. The school has a positive effect not only on the work life of the person but on the whole life of the person.

The student is a major stakeholder in S2WT. A student who greatly benefited from S2WT programs responds to the need to have well-rounded productive persons that the future society or our society needs.

In the Philippines, the most common S2WT program is On-the-Job Training (OJT). Majority of TVET courses have OJT as a requirement to finish the course and at the same time applying the functions discussed above. The OJT is a crucial moment in the life of the student. Theoretically it is easy to say that OJT is a means to adjustment, it is a meaningful link, and positive connectedness to work and life. But the actuality is that during OJT new experiences, difficulties, and challenges abound. The transition can be hindered by work culture and human differences, personal life, relationships, etc. Some student find it difficult to adjust that problems arise during OJT. Instead of having a smooth transition, there are cracks and breaks that make it rough or sometimes even make the transition fail. As a preventive means the OJT monitoring program was devised. The monitoring make the OJT effective, meaningful and connected.

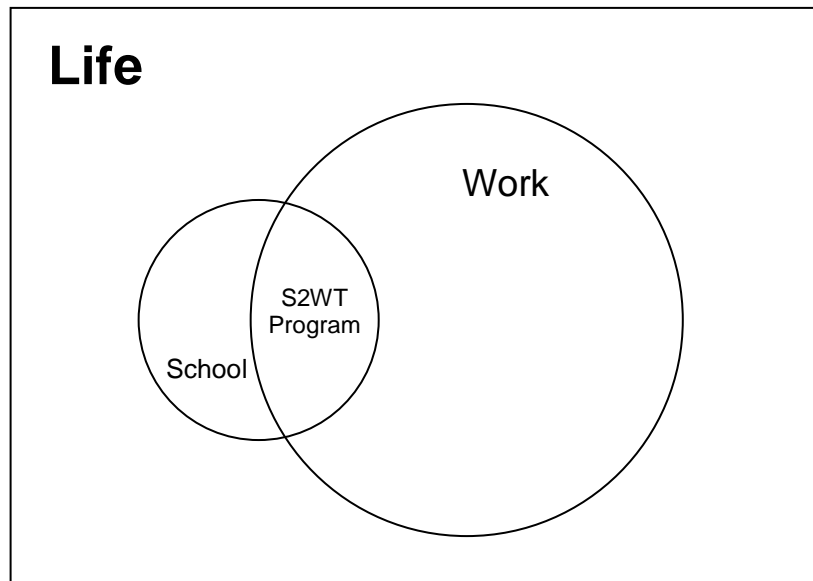


Figure 1. School to Work (S-W) Transition Framework

2. The MFI OJT Monitoring

The MFI OJT Monitoring was devised precisely to oversee the transition. The need was actually seen as urgent in a somewhat comical experience that was when an OJT student was reporting to the Placement office of MFI and he was mistaken to be an alumnus. The physical change in the 6 months he was out of the school for OJT was such that the student was not recognized anymore. During the trial period, the monitoring was done with the girls of 2004 graduates. Then succeeding batches had a full blown program which is of use until now.

MFI considered the S2WT as a learning period and consistent to its pedagogical bias, the monitoring program was planned applying a student-centered approach and with flexibility for the different learning styles of the students. The different activities of the program are summarized at Table 1 that currently comprises the monitoring program. Besides activities phone calls and field visits, the rest of the activities are obligatory for the student. These were made obligatory to put weight on the importance that each student should undergo this for the effective implementation of the OJT. The flexibility is not contradicted by being obligatory because ways and means are made to make compatible to the availability of the student.

The flexibility goes hand in hand with the advance planning and scheduling of the student reporting activity. At the start of the OJT schedules were already set and distributed among the students. Before they even receive their OJT companies assigned to them, they already know when they would be expected to report to the school. The schedule was done way ahead of time so that when they start they already can inform their

supervisors about their schedule. If there will be any conflict with the schedule, they can negotiate about it even a month before the schedule. The companies are well informed about the activities of the students especially during the company visits by the teachers and staff.

The student reporting facilitates the total development of the students as they would have consultation schedules not only with the placement office but with the guidance office for personal development and their respective technologies for the technical development. This can be seen in the “who” column of Table 1. The student reporting could be likened to mentoring with the teachers, placement staff, and guidance staff as the mentors. It is stressed here that learning in TVET is not only for technical competence, of the same importance is the learning of positive work values. With the technical competence their mentor is their teacher in their technologies and with the work values their mentor is their guidance counselors. But it was given as a feedback by technology teachers that during these student reporting activities, majority of the things they talk about are about their personal adjustment at work which are mainly on behavior and attitude. Among the OJT monitoring activities this is the most effective. Here the students are dealt with individually and as a group. This could also be held in school and outside school as would be needed by the student. Here the mentors have a first hand involvement with the transition of the students from school to work.

The OJT visit is a very helpful tool in monitoring. The monitoring objectives of the OJT visits are:

- a. To monitor the trainee/s’ exposure and immersion to the actual industry set-up.

- b. To monitor whether or not the workplace provides an avenue for the trainee/s to practice work values acquired both from the school and the industry

The visits are usually conducted by a team from MFI comprised by representatives from the placement office, guidance office, and the student's technology department. After setting an appointment with the company partner, they hold a meeting at the company in the following suggested procedure from the MFI OJT Visit Guidelines:

- a. Talk with the HR. It is but appropriate to channel HR questions to HR personnel. Supervisors might have no information concerning personnel matters. Besides, this chance is to strengthen the contact or linkage of the School with the Company.

- b. Talk with the supervisor. There might be some information that the supervisor cannot conceal in the presence of the student/s, thus the private time with the supervisor. The supervisor however, has to be oriented about the objectives of the visit.

- c. Talk both with the supervisor and the trainee/s. This chance is essential for the following reasons: 1) A good transition from the talk with the supervisor to the talk with the student/s; 2) Immediate address of the concerns of the student, the Company and/or the School; 3) Team from MFI could actually witness/observe how the student/s and the supervisor relate or deal with each other.

- d. Talk with the student/s. Talk with the student/s is a must for the following reasons: 1) If the OJT visit is to monitor the student/s' exposure, immersion, and their skills/values application, among of the main sources of such information are the student/s themselves. 2) Some sensitive information about the Company or personnel in the company just cannot be divulged especially in the presence of concerned persons/ Company representative. 3) The student might have personal issues that have to be followed up. 4) This chance is for the MFI Team, thus Company personnel might feel "out of place."

- e. After talking with the student/s and depending upon the situation, should there be need for clarifications, MFI Team could call in again the supervisor.

The visit is an appropriate tool to monitor the transition because again first hand information can be obtained on the actual transition from school to work. Here the major stakeholders are personally present to discuss deeper the how the transition is

happening. All of these feedback and information obtained are to be documented on a report after the visit.

The OJT get-together activity is another important part of the MFI monitoring. The whole batch of OJT students come together in one venue to evaluate their OJT. They discuss their OJT in small groups then present it to the batch and the teachers and staff. The process is as follows:

- a. Ask the students to answer the OJT Evaluation form (10mins).

- b. Group the students into 10 per group. They could be of the same section depending on the number of those who went for OJT.

- c. Ask each group to discuss their answers and come up with a summary of the significant answers per question of the evaluation (45mins)

- d. Give each group 5mins to report their discussion.

- e. Proceed to conduct the rest of the lined-up activities

The questions in the evaluation form are as follows:

- a. How did the OJT help you?
- b. What were the highlights of the OJT?
- c. What competencies have you acquired?
- d. What difficulties did you encounter prior and during your OJT?

Again this is a first hand feedback system on the school to work transition of the students. And they even get to discuss it among themselves and gather information and learning that could be applicable to their own situation. The learning is also easily acceptable coming from their contemporaries.

3. Evaluation of the OJT Monitoring Program

At the end of the OJT and also to end the monitoring, the students did an evaluation of the program. The evaluation is specifically aimed for the student reporting activity as this is the main and extensive involvement of the students. The questions posed at the evaluation are:

- a. How did the OJT Monthly Monitoring help you?

- b. What were the difficulties you encountered in accomplishing the OJT monthly monitoring?

- c. Would you recommend the OJT monthly monitoring for succeeding batches of OJTs? Why or why not?

- d. Comments and suggestions for improvement on schedule, placement/guidance/teachers involved; procedure

Table 1. The MFI OJT Monitoring Activities

| Activity Title | What | When | Where | Who |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Student Reporting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual or group consultation These are about reports on activities of the month; discuss problems encountered, discuss possible areas for improvement; review lessons related to job; etc. | Once a month | MFI and/or where deemed necessary | Placement Office, Guidance Office, or their respective Technology Departments |
| Phone calls and/or e-mails | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student could consult through phone call or e-mail when the matter is urgent or there are situations that meeting personally is impossible. | As needed | | Placement Office, Guidance Office, or their respective Technology Departments |
| Field Visits or consultations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company visits or OJT visits To observe the student in the actual workplace and to interview the one in-charge of the student in the company | At least once during the OJT | OJT Company | Placement Office, Guidance Office, or their respective Technology Departments |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home visit or visit to the boarding house of the student/s To know how the student is adjusting with especially if it was the first time to stay in a boarding house If there is a need to interview parents or guardian at home | As needed | Home, boarding house | Placement Office or Guidance Office |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual or group consultation | As needed | Not in MFI | Placement Office or Guidance Office |
| Supplementary Seminars | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seminars held in plenary (all the students of the same batch) on topics related to their adjustment. | Every other monthly | MFI | Placement Office |
| Get-togethers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A plenary gathering of all the students of the same batch | March and September | MFI | Placement Office |

Going back to the reasoning that the OJT monitoring makes the OJT (a school to work transition program) effective, meaningful, and connected, the answers to the evaluation questions can illustrate if indeed the monitoring was able to achieve that. Figure 2 shows the tally of the answers the students gave for the first question. Among the answers, the most number of students replied that the monitoring helped them to deal with different problems they encounter in OJT. These problems are of varied nature. It could be about their OJT companies, personal matters, etc., This is consistent to the fact that during the transition there would be a lot of difficulties that turn out to be problems.

Still referring to Figure 2, the second highest answer is to cope, adjust, prepare for work. With all the challenges the students encounter, the monitoring help them cope and adjust to these challenges and therefore preparing them to work. With these two answers, the monitoring made the OJT effective because the students were helped be prepared to work. The same can be said with the

answers of self-improvement and guide/advise. It should also be noted that the students see the monitoring as time to unwind/relax/de-stress.

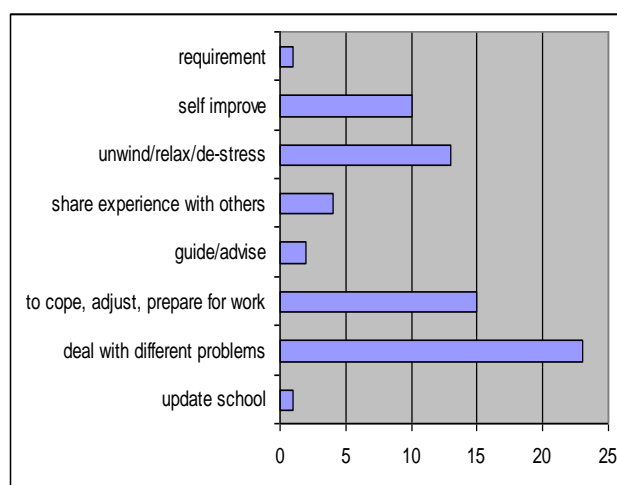


Figure 2. How OJT Monitoring Helped

The implementation of the monitoring has problems. On the side of the students, the problems they encountered in accomplishing the monitoring is shown in Figure 3. Majority of the students said that the problem they encountered was the schedule. Since during OJT they were treated the same with the regular working employees, there would be conflicts with the working hours and the monitoring. Sometime they were assigned in an out of town field work and they do not have the time to go back to MFI on their schedule.

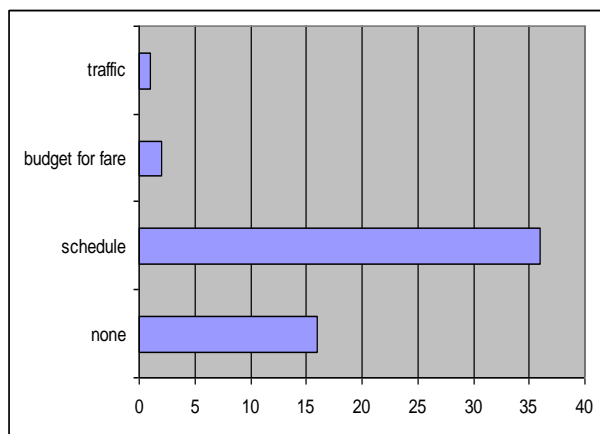


Figure 3. The Difficulties encountered

On the third question in the evaluation, all the students replied that they recommend the monitoring program to following batches who will undergo the OJT. Figure 4 is the tally of the reasons they gave for saying yes. Highest in the tally is help solve problem and next is talk to someone. And the third highest is guide/support/advise. All three reasons pertain to facing the challenges they have encountered and which they want the next batch to be aware of. Its is important for them that they have someone to help them solve problems encountered, someone to talk to, and someone to guide, support, and advise them as they go through the transition program.

The students also gave their suggestions for improvement. With the schedule they suggest that the monitoring be done on Fridays, during student's day-off, or on a weekend. It should be finished on time since some have to go back to work. And that re-schedule should be allowed 3-days before the appointment. The suggestions given for the placement/guidance/teachers involved were that they have to be on time, produce written report about common problems and remedies in OJT that students can refer to, and they be more available. There are a lot of suggestions also for the procedure or way of implementation and these are: there should be more interactive activities and chat, activities should be more relaxing and fun, and that there should be more variety.

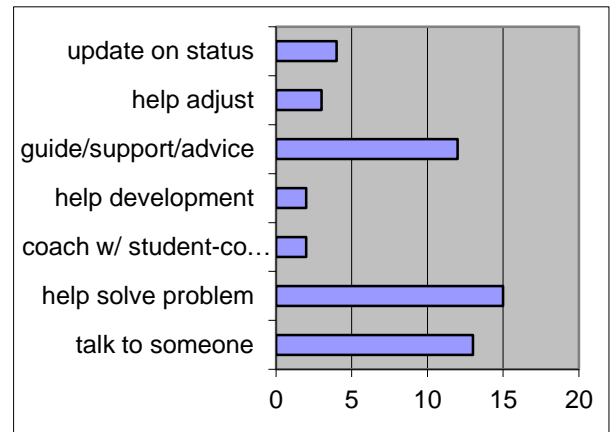


Figure 4. Reasons to Recommend

4. Conclusion

Monitoring during the school to work transition program is important to make it effective, meaningful, and connected. From Reference [2] "By establishing relationships with caring and competent adults who can provide emotional support and facilitate skill development, less-experienced youth and adults are more likely to bridge the gap between school and work." This happens in the MFI monitoring as the placement/guidance/teachers acts as the mentors of the students. The ones in-charge at the company can also act as mentors but no specific program is laid out for them.

The OJT visit is a step towards the collaboration of the school and the company in the school to work transition. Again from Reference [2], "Workplace mentoring requires a partnership commitment that involves time, energy, and resources of qualified mentors, school personnel, and learners themselves." The monitoring is an investment for the success of S2WT. That is why if S2WT programs are important, time and effort are wasted if no monitoring is done. Short-term goals are accomplished but the transition has a lot of long term effects that the society might suffer if not effectively given handled.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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